



One Hundred Ninth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515
March 3, 2005

General Patrick Hughes
Acting Undersecretary for Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection and
Assistant Secretary for Information Analysis
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC

Dear General Hughes:

Recently, ChoicePoint made public that criminals gained access to its massive database of private consumer information. We are concerned that this and similar breaches could be used by terrorist organizations to steal identities and credit information. Terrorists could use this information to enter the United States illegally or to finance terrorist attacks. We request that the Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate review this matter further.

ChoicePoint's database has 19 billion public records that include everything from motor vehicle registrations, license and deed transfers, military records, names, addresses and Social Security numbers. Thieves were able to access this information, according to public reports, and make hundreds of thousands of U.S. consumers vulnerable to identity theft.

This security gap places America at risk. There is nothing to stop an organized terrorist organization like Al Qaeda from using this vulnerability to access the personal information of private citizens and use it against our nation. With the information that companies like ChoicePoint maintain, terrorists could have a better chance of entering the United States, they could better smuggle finances, and could obtain better cover when preparing to perform terrorist attacks. As noted in a February 21 *USA Today* article, "cyberfraud, ranging from credit card theft to money laundering is the latest wrinkle in terrorists' use of the Internet."

In order to better understand what the Department of Homeland Security is doing to ensure that commercial databases containing private information are secure, we ask that you:

1. Provide us with an analysis of the vulnerability of ChoicePoint and similar commercial database aggregators to terrorists seeking personal information contained in their systems.
2. Provide an analysis evaluating the use of commercial databases aggregators such as ChoicePoint by federal agencies, explaining whether any of those agencies have privacy policies, safeguards, or plans in place to protect the use of the information. This evaluation should include information regarding whether any of the agencies require special safeguards to be in place at the commercial database aggregator.
3. Provide an analysis of the types of security measures available to improve the security of ChoicePoint and similar commercial database aggregators from terrorist attack.

We look forward to a detailed response that addresses the opportunities ChoicePoint and similar databases provide to terrorists.

Sincerely,



Representative Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Homeland Security



Representative John Conyers
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee



Senator Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on International Operations
and Terrorism,
Senate Foreign Relations Committee



Representative Loretta Sanchez
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Economic Security,
Infrastructure Protection, and
Cybersecurity,
House Committee on
Homeland Security



Representative Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing,
and Terrorism Assessment,
House Committee on Homeland Security